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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4939
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6608
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5541
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 2082
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0323
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1273
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3825
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0747
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2162
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0988
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0272
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0773
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001674

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NSC FOR DFISK AND DTOMLINSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: CHAVISTA LABOR FEDERATION DELAYS ELECTIONS -- AGAIN

REF: A. CARACAS 1173

[1](#)B. CARACAS 1585

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(b).

[1](#)1. (U) The pro-Chavez National Workers Union (UNT) held its second congress May 26-28 with the objective of setting a date for internal elections for the trade confederation. The congress was billed as a landmark event for the labor confederation because in the three years since the group's foundation its squabbling factions had been unable to reach agreement on elections. However, UNT leaders failed to achieve consensus and settled for an agreement to hold elections in the first quarter of 2007, after the December 2006 presidential elections. The UNT leaders also pledged to support President Hugo Chavez in obtaining 10 million votes in that election. According to press reports, some 3,000 delegates attended the congress.

[1](#)2. (C) UNT National Coordinator Franklin Rondon told Poloff June 5 the decision to postpone came after several factions, including his own, had expressed concern that the union election would interfere with Chavez' presidential campaign. Rondon said a simple review of the legal time frames required to hold the union election would have put the process in late September, when the presidential campaign would be heating up. He said he was not sure whether the National Electoral Council (CNE) would be able to facilitate elections simultaneously with the presidential race. He reiterated his position that the CNE ought to provide technical support to UNT election organizers -- as stipulated in international labor standards -- rather than the CNE administering the entire process, as outlined in Venezuelan electoral law. Rondon was optimistic, however, that the BRV and the multiple UNT factions would all be ready for union elections in early [1](#)2007.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Rondon was probably putting a good face on the situation. These elections have been delayed for years while the UNT factions have dithered. Still, the good showing for the conference suggests the beleaguered

confederation may be starting to get its act together for sometime next year. Rondon's position regarding CNE involvement limited to technical advice echoes that of Venezuela-specific pronouncements by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as well as with the position of the pro-opposition Venezuelan Workers Confederation (CTV). The BRV is wary of permitting fully autonomous union elections as it may not be able to control which of the UNT leaders, who display varying degrees of loyalty to Chavez, is ultimately elected.

WHITAKER